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**HISTORIC PRESERVATION REVIEW BOARD  
STAFF REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION**

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Landmark/District:	<b>Capitol Hill Historic District</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Agenda
Address:	<b>717 8<sup>th</sup> Street, SE</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Consent
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Concept
Meeting Date:	<b>January 26, 2012</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Alteration
Case Number:	<b>12-095</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> New Construction
Staff Reviewer:	<b>Amanda Molson</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Demolition
		<input type="checkbox"/> Subdivision

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Owner Greg Selfridge, with plans prepared by Ziad Elias Demian, AIA, requests concept approval for rear and rooftop additions to 717 8<sup>th</sup> Street, SE the Capitol Hill Historic District.

**Property Description**

Construction of 717 8<sup>th</sup> Street, SE pre-dates building permit records, but this two-story, brick building likely dates to the 1870s or early 1880s. It appears on maps as of 1888, and a 1927 map shows the existing footprint. The building is located on present-day Barracks Row, opening at the rear to a public alley. The east side of the square is comprised of retail buildings and restaurants, and the west side of the square is a mix of office and residential use. The building is largely intact; however, the ground-floor storefront space of 717 has been altered to include multi-light windows that are at odds with the building's Italianate style.

**Proposal**

The applicant seeks to rehabilitate the building for an as-yet undetermined new tenant by renovating the interior, expanding the building envelope, and constructing a more compatible storefront. The existing footprint of the building would be retained, less a small one-story rear bump-out and the non-contributing garage, and incorporated into the project. A rear addition would extend the first and second floors to fully fill the lot, thereby enclosing the existing dogleg. A third floor would be added, also extending to the rear property line, but with a setback of approximately 27' from the front wall. The area of setback would provide space for a roof deck, with an existing parapet wall along the cornice serving as a railing. The new storefront is shown as accordion doors topped by transom windows.

**Evaluation**

Discussion of the project with the applicant has been most focused on the rear and rooftop additions, given the Board's close attention to massing and visibility issues for this type of building expansion. A mockup of the third floor addition's front wall was constructed for HPO review, and it showed that the top of the addition would not be visible from any angle on 8<sup>th</sup> Street. There would be very minor visibility of the third floor via the small opening between 717 and 715 8<sup>th</sup>, though it is nearly imperceptible and does not impact the perceived massing or height of the building.

The rear elevations of commercial buildings along this row have seen a number of changes over the years (including the rear and rooftop additions currently in construction at 731 8<sup>th</sup> Street, SE), providing the basis for flexibility in massing and design as viewed from the alley. Although the three-story massing appears large in the perspective renderings, as compared to its closest neighboring buildings, it will not be the tallest building on the block when completed. The front elevation of the third floor is contemporary and uncomplicated, ensuring that it will not become a distraction when viewed from the roof terrace or the windows of buildings across the street.

Because the space is currently unprogrammed, with tenants not yet selected, the storefront design remains a work in-progress. Although accordion doors have been approved on Barracks Row, they have most often been installed in the storefronts of buildings that are non-contributing or of a less-defined style (733 8<sup>th</sup> Street, SE), are of a 1920s/1930s vintage that can support a more streamlined design (514 8<sup>th</sup> Street, SE), or on buildings that have already seen many changes over time (524 8<sup>th</sup> Street, SE). They appear somewhat discordant on this overtly Italianate commercial building, particularly given that its small size makes the storefront a very prominent feature. If used, the proportions should better relate to the door and transom to the right. The applicants should continue to work with staff as a tenant is selected and as final construction drawings are prepared in order to ensure that the storefront meets the specific use (accordion doors are arguably unnecessary for a retail storefront), style, and era of construction of this building.

Although the railing and surface area of the third floor terrace will not be visible, the Board has often required a setback of these deck areas from the front elevation. This better ensures that the inevitable clutter of rooftop decks – tables, chairs, umbrellas, outdoor heaters, plants – will not be visible from the street, or only marginally visible. Given the significant setback of the third floor, the roof deck area is quite large. If the deck area was set back further from the front wall, by 10' or so, it would ensure that these additive elements are not a distraction. The exact setback can be determined in consultation with staff, based on additional visibility studies.

Finally, the plans do not show a means of reaching the second or third stories other than by using the stairs. Any accessibility measures added to the plans during the permit process or after construction may require further Board review if the revisions have a pronounced impact on the building's exterior.

### **Recommendation**

The HPO recommends that the Board approve the concept proposal for rooftop and rear additions as consistent with the purposes of the preservation act and delegate final approval to staff, with the following conditions:

- that the applicants will continue to refine the storefront design in consultation with the HPO before final approval
- that a setback of the third floor roof deck is shown in the final plans, as determined in consultation with the HPO
- this should not be construed as approval for any necessary zoning relief